



News for Immediate Release
May 31, 2007

Contacts:

- [Sue Sims](#), Public Affairs Office, (916) 651-7242
- [Ted Thomas](#), Information Officer, (916) 653-9712

DWR Stops Pumping to Protect Delta Smelt

Sacramento -- The Department of Water Resources (DWR) today announced it will stop pumping at State Water Project (SWP) facilities in the Delta to provide maximum protection for Delta smelt. This action follows the observed entrainment of juvenile smelt between May 25 and May 31 at the Harvey O. Banks pumping plant facility.

"Drastic times call for drastic measures," said DWR Director Lester Snow. "While there are clearly many factors at play in the current decline of smelt in the Delta, we must act on the one that is within our control. That is why DWR will stop pumping in the Delta as a preventative measure to protect threatened fish that are currently located near our facilities."

Snow also challenged other public agencies with jurisdiction over activities affecting Delta smelt to take aggressive actions to protect the species. Scientific studies indicate that pelagic fish are affected by many stressors. Water project operations can affect fish; however, invasive species, toxics, and diversion by many other water users in the Delta have dramatic effects on these fish.

This year's toxic events in the Sacramento River system in the Delta occurred at a time and location where adult Delta smelt were concentrated and spawning. The extremely low numbers of young smelt, identified earlier this month, are likely a direct result of these toxic events. Regardless of the cause of this drop in Delta smelt, all agencies need to be taking actions to protect the smelt population.

DWR stopped pumping at the Harvey O. Banks pumping plant this morning. Some water deliveries will be made to South San Francisco Bay users from water supplies already in the aqueduct. DWR will collaborate with other agencies to evaluate water conditions in the Delta and health and safety needs for water users.

"Our actions to save the smelt will place a real hardship on some water users in the Bay Area, Central Valley and Southern California," said Snow. "However, given the concerns

about the Delta smelt, this is a prudent action at this time."

The State Water Project supplies water to 25 million Californians and 750,000 acres of farmland.

In early 2005, scientists working on the Interagency Ecological Program (IEP) first identified the decline in pelagic fish species. Since then, the state has initiated extensive and expensive studies to determine the causes for the decline in pelagic fish productivity in the Bay/Delta Estuary. In addition to considering the impact of state and federal water project operations, scientists have identified many other causes of a changing ecosystem.

In response, DWR has initiated measures to protect the Delta ecosystem, and minimize the effects of exports on fish and their habitat.

This year, the SWP modified its operations by use of the adaptive Environmental Water Account. From January through mid-May, about 300,000 acre-feet of water were used to reduce exports to help protect Delta smelt. During this time period, no delta smelt were recorded in the SWP fish salvage operations at the Banks Pumping plant. In mid-May, exports were reduced again due to the distribution of Delta smelt into areas that made them more susceptible to pumping. On May 24, Delta smelt began to appear at Banks pumping plant in low numbers. These numbers have increased in recent days triggering DWR's response today.

"This is another indication that the Delta is broken and needs to be fixed," said Snow. Governor Schwarzenegger time and again has said that we need to invest in our water systems, including more storage, conservation and a long term strategy for the Delta.

Last year, the governor initiated a comprehensive Delta Vision process and appointed a Blue Ribbon Task Force to recommend future actions that will achieve a sustainable Delta. In addition, many state and federal agencies and environmental groups signed a formal Planning Agreement in September 2006 and are developing Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) for at-risk fish species under the provisions of the State Natural Community Conservation Planning Act (NCCPA) and the federal Endangered Species Act under Section 10 that allows for Habitat Conservation Plans (HCP). These efforts will provide a framework for future action.

The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.

[Back to Top of Page](#)

Visit [Archived News Releases](#) or return to the [DWR Home](#)

Contact the [DWR Public Affairs Office](#) for more information about DWR's water activities.